

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 AF-06 ARA-06 EA-07 EUR-12 NEA-10

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04

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R 141630Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6808

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY LISBON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: KERSTEN INTERVIEW BY FRENCH LABOR

REPORTERS

1. SUMMARY: IN COURSE OF MEETING WITH FRENCH LABOR

REPORTERS KERSTEN OF ICFTU SAID THAT HE IS OPPOSED

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TO CGT'S APPLICATION WITH ETUC AND THAT ICFTU WILL

NEVER ENGAGE IN ANY ACTION WHICH MAY DIVIDE AMERICAN
LABOR MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. OTTO KERSTEN, ICFTU SECGEN, WAS GUEST OF HONOR
AT LUCHEON BY AJIS (ASSOCIATION OF LABOR REPORTERS)
ON 9 JANUARY. HIS REPLIES TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUB-
MITTED IN ADVANCE COVERED FOLLOWING POINTS:

(A) HE CLAIMED THAT ICFTU, BEING A REPRESENTATIVE
ORGANIZATION, SERVES USEFUL PURPOSE IN MAINTAINING
LINKS WITH AND CONCILIATING CONFLICTING INTERESTS IN
VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD, I.E., MIDDLE EAST. HE
REFERRED TO HIS RECENT VISIT TO CYPRUS WHERE CONTACTS
WITH BOTH COMMUNITIES HELPED SORT OUT SOME LOCAL
PROBLEMS. HE DID NOT MENTION HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL.

(B) THERE ARE "INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFERENCES" BETWEEN
ICFTU AND WFTU, AND AS A RESULT THERE WAS NO
POSSIBILITY OF ANY COMMON ORGANIZATION BETWEEN THE
TWO. HE ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS SOME
COOPERATION AT TRADE LEVEL BETWEEN WFTU AND ICFTU
AFFILIATES. HE REJECTED BASIC ANTI-COMMUNISM. THUS
"ICFTU COULD NOT GO ALONG WITH MEANY'S CRITICISM OF
ILO."

(C) HE DREW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PORTUGAL AND
SPAIN, CLAIMING THAT CARILLO ENJOYS MORE FREEDOM OF
ACTION (AUTONOMY) IN SPAIN THAN CUNHAL IN PORTUGAL.
THERE ARE TWO ICFTU AFFILIATES IN SPAIN, I.E. THE
UGT AND THE BASQUE ORGANIZATION. THERE IS ALSO A
LINK WITH USO THROUGH IMF.

(D) SOME WORKERS COMMISSIONS HAVE SOLICITED
ICFTU AFFILIATION, BUT THE WC LOYALTIES ARE UNCLEAR.
THE ICFTU POLICY AT PRESENT IS TO PRESS FOR FREE
TRADE UNION ELECTIONS WHICH ALONE CAN CLARIFY
LOYALTIES AND REPRESENTIVITY.

(E) HE WROTE TO PRESIDENT GISCARD ASKING FOR
OBSERVER STATUS AT THE NORTH-SOUTH CONFERENCE AND
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THE PRESIDENT HAD REPLIED RATHER FAVORABLEY, SAYING
THAT HE INTENDS TO CONSULT THE TWO PRESIDENTS.

(F) IN RESPONSE TO GOADING BY JOURNALISTS ON
MEANY AND THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT, KERSTEN
REPLIED THAT MEANY WAS A MAN OF STRONG CONVICTIONS
WHICH DESERVED RESPECT. HE IS AWARE THAT CERTAIN
INDEPENDENT AMERICAN UNIONS LIKE UAW WOULD

LIKE TO AFFILITATE WITH ICFTU, BUT THE ICFTU INTENDS TO STAY AWAY FROM ANYTHING THAT MIGHT APPEAR AS SOWING DIVISION IN AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT.

(G) ASKED ABOUT ETUC, HE SAID CGT'S REFUSAL TO CHANGE ITS RELATIONS WITH WFTU WAS MAIN OBSTACLE TO ITS APPLICATION FOR ETUC AFFILIATION. IN REPLY TO DIRECT QUESTION, HE STRESSED THAT PERSONALLY HE WOULD OPPOSE CGT AFFILIATION BECAUSE IT WOULD WEAKEN THE FREE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. WHEN CONFRONTED WITH QUESTION THAT SOME ETUC AFFILIATES ARE ALLOWED TO RETAIN THEIR ICFTU AFFILIATION, HE POINTED OUT THAT ETUC STATUTES CONTAIN REFERENCES TO "FREE TRADE UNIONISM" EVEN IF IT IS NOT INCLUDED IN ITS TITLE.

(I) ANTOINE LAVAL OF FO, WHO WAS ALSO A GUEST, INTERVENED AT THIS POINT TO OBJECT TO ATTEMPTS TO TREAT EQUIVALENT ICFTU AND WFTU MEMBERSHIPS. "WFTU IS NOT A WORLD-WIDE FREE AND REPRESENTATIVE MOVEMENT." IN ANY EVENT THE MAIN SOURCE OF INTERNAL DIVISIONS WITHIN ETUC IS NOT POLITICAL DOCTRINE BUT EEC MEMBERSHIP. THE CONFLICTS OF NATIONAL INTERESTS BETWEEN EEC MEMBERS AND THOSE OUTSIDE IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF ETUC DIFFICULTIES.

(K) IN REPLY TO THE QUESTION WHY ICFTU DISAFFILIATES SOUTH AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS ON THE GROUNDS THEY ARE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AND CLOSES ITS EYES WHEN THE SAME SITUATION EXISTS IN ASIA AND AFRICA, HE SAID THAT THE ICFTU DOES TRY TO BE CONSISTENT BUT IT WAS DIFFICULT WHERE TRADE UNION LEADERS CLAIM THAT FREELY AND GENUINELY THEY ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH THEIR GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

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(L) ANOTHER QUESTION DEALT WITH WAS PROTECTIONIST
POLICIES OF EUROPEAN UNIONS AGAINST PRODUCTS FROM THE
THIRD WORLD. KERSTEN ADMITTED THAT IT IS NOT EASY
TO RECONCILE THE OBLIGATION OF UNIONS IN ADVANCED
AND UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO DEFEND THE INTERESTS
OF THEIR RESPECTIVE MEMBERS. HE THOUGHT THE BEST
WAY TO GO ABOUT IT WOULD BE THROUGH PRESSURE ON
MULTINATIONALS TO GUARANTEE MAXIMUM BENEFITS TO THE
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THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES IN WHICH THEY MAY BE OPERATING.

3. COMMENT: KERSTTEN MADE GOOD IMPRESSION.
WARNED TO ADVANCE BY LAVAL ABOUT THE DIVERSITY OF
POLITICAL BELIEFS AMONG HIS HOSTS, KERSTEN SPOKE
CAREFULLY AND RESPONSIBLY. HIS INSISTENCE ON
WRITTEN QUESTIONS SPARED HIM THE DANGERS IMPLICIT
IN A RAPID GIVE-AND-TAKE IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.

THE FACT THAT LAVAL FOUND IT NECESSARY TO INTERVENE
ONLY ONCE IS ANOTHER EVIDENCE THAT KERSTEN
REMAINED IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION. BY THE
SAME TOKEN, LAVAL'S PRESENCE ACTED AS AN INHIBITING
FACTOR TO ANY DESIRE BY UNFRIENDLY JOURNALISTS TO
PUSH KERSTEN HARD.
RUSH

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